



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 113th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 159

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2013

No. 29

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BRIAN SCHATZ, a Senator from the State of Hawaii.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

You, O God, are a shield for America. Because of Your mercy and power, we lift our heads with optimism. When we cry aloud to You during our moments of exasperation, You answer us from Your holy mountain.

As we anticipate an across-the-board set of budget cuts becoming law in our land, we still expect to see Your goodness prevail. We remain unafraid of what the future holds because You have promised to never leave or forsake us. Rise up, O God, and save us from ourselves. Pour Your wisdom upon our lawmakers so that they will do Your will.

We pray in Your holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable BRIAN SCHATZ led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The assistant bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,

Washington, DC, February 28, 2013.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable BRIAN SCHATZ, a Sen-

ator from the State of Hawaii, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. SCHATZ thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following any leader remarks, the Senate will be in morning business for 1 hour. The Republicans will control the first half, the majority the final half. Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of the American Family Economic Protection Act.

At a time to be determined today, there will be two cloture votes on the motions to proceed to S. 388 and S. 16, which are the Democratic and Republican sequestration bills. Senators will be notified when the votes are scheduled. I will work that out with Senator MCCONNELL.

FAREWELL TO RICK DEBOBES

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today the Senate says goodbye to a valued and accomplished staff member, Rick DeBobes, who is retiring after 10 years as staff director for Senator LEVIN in the Armed Services Committee.

Rick came to the Senate more than two decades ago, after a distinguished 26-year career as a judge advocate in the U.S. Navy. He spent his entire Capitol Hill career with the same committee—that committee being the Armed Services Committee—a rare occurrence in the Senate. He worked first for Chairman Sam Nunn and then Chairman CARL LEVIN.

For the last decade, Rick has led the committee's oversight of two of our

longest running wars ever—Iraq and Afghanistan—working to reward the dedication of military personnel and their families.

Under Chairman LEVIN's guiding hand, he has also filled the staff of the Armed Services Committee with the next generation of national security professionals.

Rick's expertise, integrity, and commitment to public service will be missed by Democrats, Republicans, and our country. On behalf of the Senate community, I thank him for his service and wish him well in his retirement.

THE SEQUESTER

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Rick's departure from the Senate Armed Services Committee comes during a trying time for our Nation's military, as deep across-the-board spending cuts are set to strike hundreds of thousands of civilian employees at the Defense Department who will be furloughed in the coming weeks and months. Families and businesses across the country are also bracing for the pain of deep cuts in programs that keep our food safe, our water clean, and our borders secure.

But it is not too late to avert these damaging cuts, and cuts for which the overwhelming majority of Republicans in both the House and Senate voted—174 in the House, 28 here in the Senate. We believe we have a balanced plan to remove the threat of the sequester, fully paid for.

Our proposal would reduce the deficit by making smart spending cuts, and it would also close wasteful tax loopholes allowing companies that outsource jobs to China or India to claim tax deductions for doing so.

Our plan would stop wasteful subsidies to farmers, some of whom don't even farm anymore. That is right, there are some farmers who grew rice decades ago, who still get payments from the Federal Government for rice they do not grow. Chairman STABENOW

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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